Handi-Lift Advisory Council Meeting Minutes September 21, 2011

The meeting was held in the conference room of the Hood building on S. President Street. Attending today's meeting were: Dr. Scott Crawford, Chairperson; Rev. Sam Gleese, City ADA Coordinator; Ms. Traci Brent, City of Jackson Transit Services; Mr. Sam Tensley, JATRAN General Manager (PTM); Judy Sikes (Mississippi Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities); Eddie Turner, Bonnie Thompson, Lee Cole, Jason Bunch, Karen Robinson, Namon Hulitt, Fred Myers, and Jerri Walton (LIFE of Mississippi).

The meeting convened at 1pm.

Old Business:

I. Dr. Crawford noted that the new Handi-Lift Customer's Guide had been mailed out including the required cover letter in late August. Several commented that the printing and format were quite professional and the committee was generally pleased with the document. Dr. Crawford thanked all those involved, including David Knight at the DOJ, and commended Attorney Kay Hardage of DRMS for her helpful editing of the cover letter.

Ms. Cole asked where in the document the appeals process was discussed. Ms. Brent indicated that the appeals process is mentioned on page 12 including the web address to download the document. Crawford commented that, in hindsight, it would have been better to have a separate major heading for the appeals process.

Dr. Crawford asked why the Customer Guide was sent out without the availability of alternative formats. Ms. Brent indicated that it was sent out at the request of the City Attorney's Office. Reverend Gleese said he was unaware it was sent out at all until Handi-Lift customers informed him. Dr. Crawford commented that the City's legal department should know better than anyone of the need to have alternative formats available for customers who need them (e.g., audio, large print, and Braille).

There was a lengthy discussion about how to proceed now that it has been sent out without the alternative formats ready. Ms. Cole suggested sending a post card to **every** Handi-Lift customer asking if they require the document in Braille, large print, or audio format (CD, or Tape). The customer can then check the appropriate box and mail the document back, or call the Handi-Lift Customer Service Number, which should be clearly listed on the card. The consensus of the committee was that this was the best way to proceed. However, Dr. Crawford added that he knew of at least one individual who has already requested a Braille document and that those should be sent out **as soon as possible or when the request is made** (i.e., do not wait to

send the postcard). Finally, Ms. Brent indicated that she thinks that the alternative formats should be available within 30 days.

- II. New Buses Ms. Brent indicated she believes that the four FY 2011 paratransit buses should arrive "any day now." Dr. Crawford asked about the budgeting of four new Handi-Lift buses for fiscal year 2012. Specifically, he wanted to know when they would be ordered and whether they would be ordered with a minimum of four wheelchair securement locations. Crawford explained that it would be helpful to have this additional capacity for wheelchair users on some of the buses for several reasons. First, it makes it easier for the bus operators to secure the chairs. Second, it increases capacity for everyday use; and third, it allows more efficient evacuation of people that use wheelchairs during emergency situations. Since capacity constraints remains an outstanding problem with Handi-Lift, Dr. Crawford strongly urged the City to order those buses in October. Reverend Gleese said he would "forward" the suggestion up the chain of command.
- III. RouteMatch Software Ms. Cole indicated that there have been some snags with implementing the new software. Namely, that rider's pick-up times are being changed after the fact and they are not being given proper notification. Ms. Robinson and Mr. Tensley explained that the software can and does sometimes change pick-up times but that they will be more vigilant about informing customers when this happens.

Ms. Robinson expressed some concern about the software, in as much as it does not seem to accurately compute the travel time between destinations. Dr. Crawford asked if she has pursued this problem, and she said that she is in touch with a technical support person, "David", at RouteMatch and that they are working on it. Since accuracy in estimating travel times is absolutely <u>vital</u>, this committee will need to follow-up on this item in November.

New Business:

Dr. Crawford asked about the possibility of offering discounted fixed-route passes to non-profit community service organizations such as Stewpot, Catholic Charities, Salvation Army, Gateway Rescue Mission, and others. Mr. Tensley explained that it is difficult to discern who will ultimately be using the passes (are the end-users truly disabled?), and other council members added that such a policy would be difficult to implement fairly amongst all the possible organizations requesting them.

Open Discussion:

Fred Myers asked about an incident that happened last week, in which he was told that the schedule was full. Ms. Robinson explained that this was due to a glitch in implementing the RouteMatch software and that it "wouldn't happen again." Mr. Myers also asked about whether his manual chair was deemed safe to ride in a Handi-Lift vehicle. He was assured that

Handi-Lift can accommodate any "common wheelchair" and that he would be properly secured in the vehicle.

Finally, there was further discussion of the need to purchase paratransit vehicles, including sedans if necessary, to reduce capacity constraints. It was generally agreed that increasing the number of operators and vehicles is the best way to ensure improved Handi-Lift service for the customers and compliance with the Consent Decree.

These Minutes were written by Council Chairperson, Dr. Scott M. Crawford, Ph.D. These Minutes were approved at the November 16, 2011, regular meeting.